



## **sycamore**

*Platanus occidentalis*

Kingdom: Plantae  
Division/Phylum: Anthophyta - flowering plants

### **Features**

One of Iowa's largest deciduous trees, the sycamore, may grow over 150 feet tall. Its bark is reddish-brown when young, breaking into scales when older. The older bark falls off in patches to reveal the white inner bark. The bright green leaves are simple and divided into three or five shallow, sharp-pointed lobes. They may grow to eight inches long and often are as wide or wider than they are long. Flowers are arranged in dense, round heads. Male and female flowers are separate, but located on the same tree. Light brown heads, up to one inch in diameter, contain many small fruits.

### **Natural History**

The sycamore grows in bottomland woods, along streams, and around lakes and ponds. It flowers through June. Its fruits are a good source of food for birds in winter. It is common in the southern half and eastern part of the state and uncommon in the Paleozoic Plateau (northeast).

### **Habitats**

Mississippi River; Missouri River; interior rivers and streams; bottomland forests

### **Iowa Status**

common, native

### **Iowa Range**

southern two-thirds of Iowa

### **Bibliography**

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.